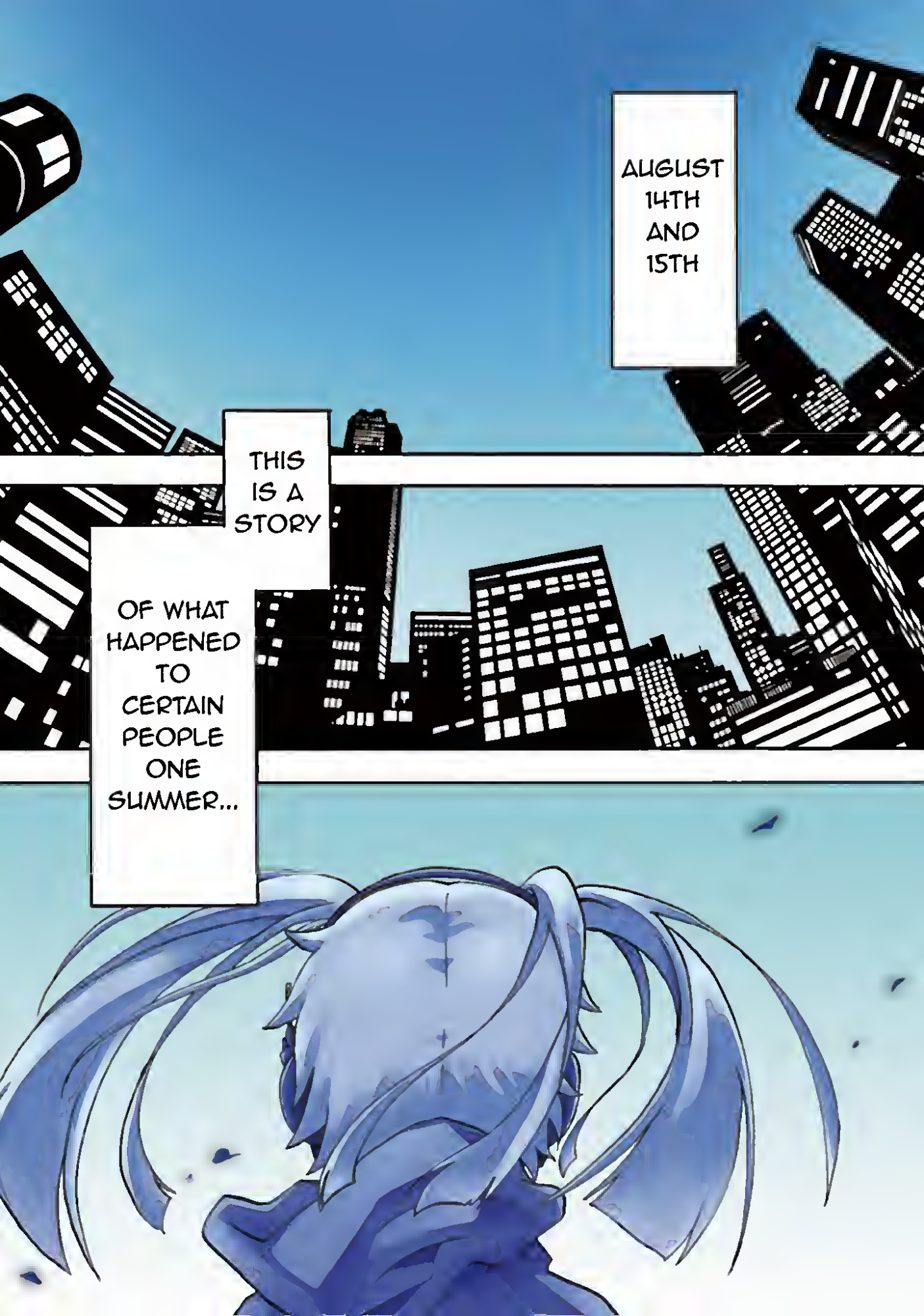
AUGUST 14TH AND 15TH
THIS IS A STORY
OF WHAT HAPPENED TO CERTAIN PEOPLE ONE SUMMER...

01 >> 01: MAN-MADE ENEMY I

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カサカサ

カチ
カチ
GIVE ME A BREAK! ARE YOU SERIOUS?!
COME ON COMPUTER, THIS IS A MATTER OF LIFE AND
DAMN IT! MY COMPUTER FROZE!
カチッ
カチッ
IT'S WOR-KING...
DEATH...
THANK GOODNESS...

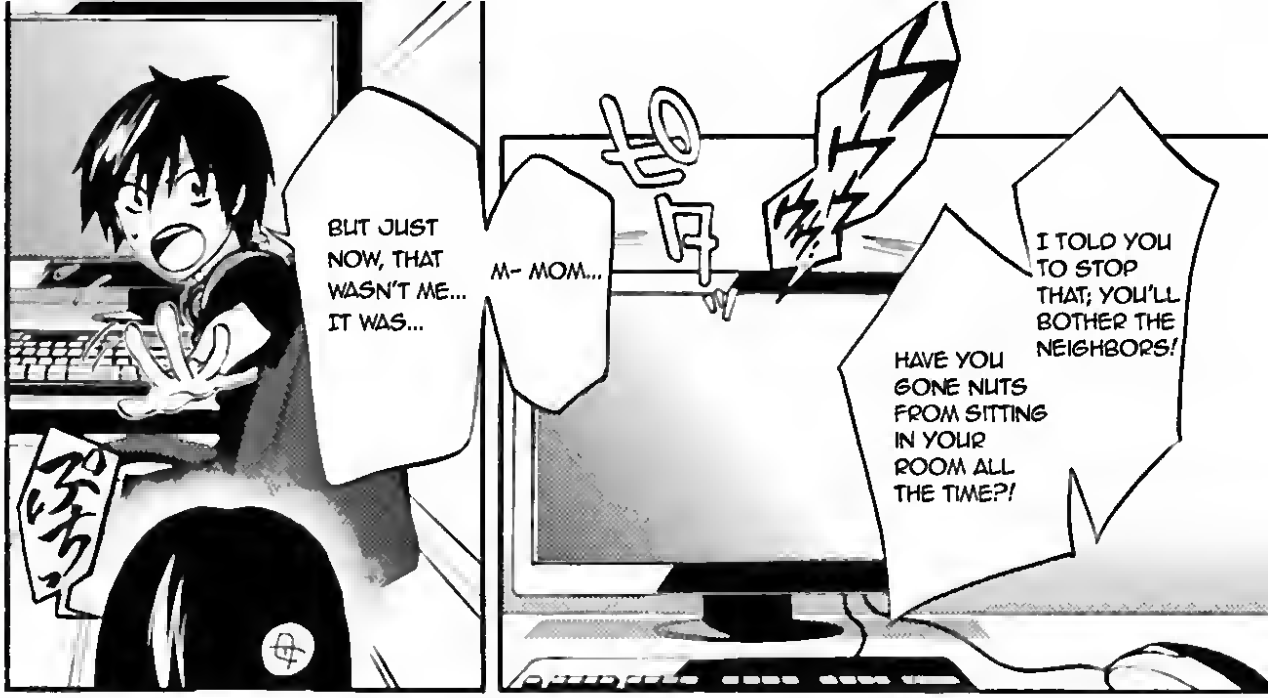
I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THAT, BUT FOR NOW I'M JUST GLAD SHE'S NOT AROUND.
I WON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
COME TO THINK OF IT, SHE'S NOT HERE...
JUST A WHILE AGO THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT A METEOR CRASH AND THE END OF THE WORLD OR SOMETHING...
もぐ
もぐ
WHAT A PEACEFUL WORLD...
LIVE
THAT POPULAR IDOL HAS BEEN CHOSEN FOR THEIR FIRST LEADING ROLE IN A DRAMA!
AND THEY'LL BE RELEASING AN ALBUM AS WELL...
HM?

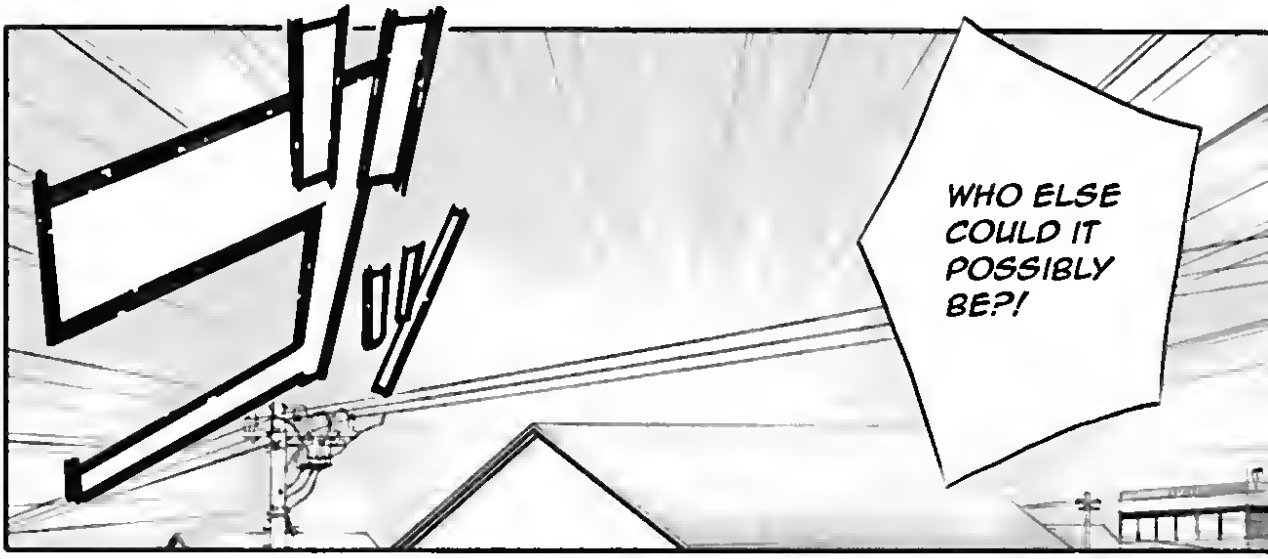
ターン!
...ANY LONGER!
THERE WE GO!
SOON ENOUGH I WON'T BE A STUCK AT HOME, HOLDING DOWN THE FORT...
WELL, WHO CARES ABOUT ALL THAT ANYWAY...

THIS...

THIS WILL SELL!!

USING MUSIC-MAKING SOFTWARE, I POURED MY HEART AND SOUL INTO COMPOSING THIS ORIGINAL PIECE...
MY GOAL IS #1 ON A VIDEO WEBSITE... FOLLOWED BY RING TONE SALES... AND A MAJOR ALBUM... NOT BAD, EH? HEH HEH...
?!!
WHA...
SO LOUD...!!
SHINTARO!!
!!


BUT JUST NOW, THAT WASN'T ME... IT WAS...
M- MOM...
I TOLD YOU TO STOP THAT; YOU'LL BOTHER THE NEIGHBORS!
HAVE YOU GONE NUTS FROM SITTING IN YOUR ROOM ALL THE TIME?!


WHO ELSE COULD IT POSSIBLY BE?!

IF IT WEREN'T FOR HER...
THAT'S SO UNFAIR...

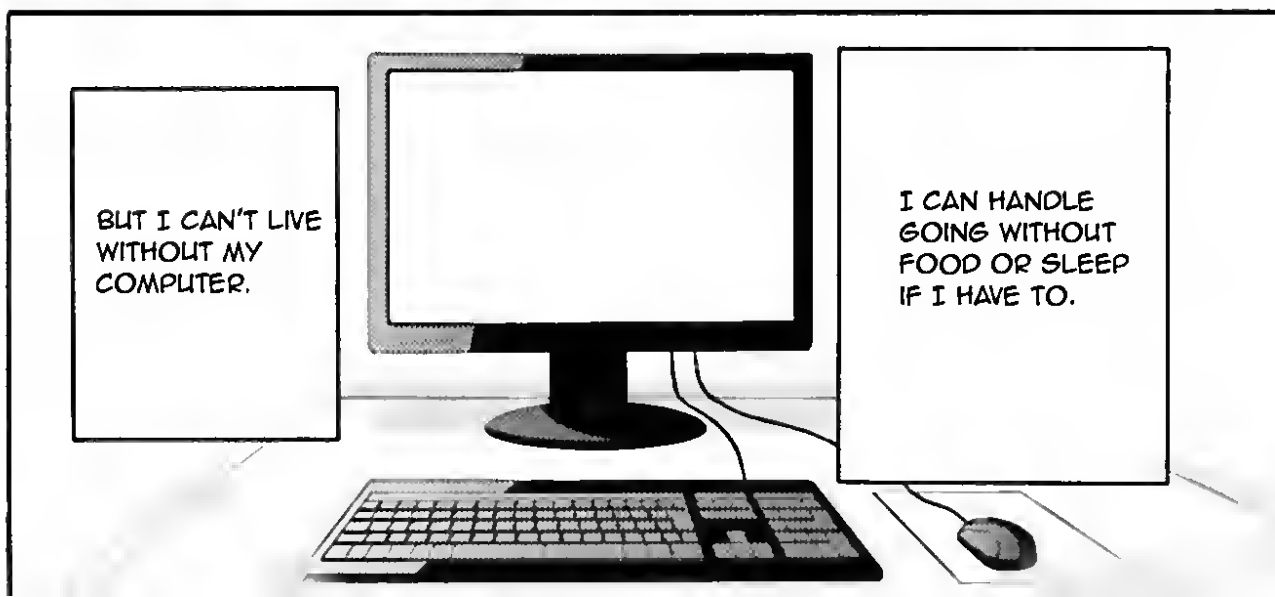
バタ!

I'D BE ABLE TO LIVE A PEACEFUL AND INTELLECTUAL LIFE
RIGHT HERE IN THIS ROOM...
IT'S ALL HER FAULT!!
HEE HEE HEE!
ARE YOU ALRIGHT, MASTER?
NOT AT ALL... ENE.

WHEN I TALK ABOUT "HER," I MEAN THIS GIRL ON MY COMPUTER SCREEN.
OH YEAH! THAT ALARM JUST NOW
IS USED BY A CERTAIN COUNTRY AS AN EMERGENCY ALERT OF LEVEL 4 OR HIGHER.
I BOOSTED THE FREQUENCY THAT BOTHERS YOU THE MOST..
I DON'T CARE!
YOU SERIOUSLY NEED TO KNOCK IT OFF! ...YOU CAN'T RISK BREAKING THE COMPUTER, YOU KNOW... SOMEONE COULD DIE!

WAIT, I KNOW.
I'M THE ONE WHO COULD DIE.

OHH... MASTER! YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT THE LIKES OF ME? YOU'RE SO KIND...
NO!! WHY WOULD I WORRY ABOUT YOU?!


I CAN HANDLE GOING WITHOUT FOOD OR SLEEP IF I HAVE TO.
BUT I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT MY COMPUTER.

I'VE SHUT MYSELF INSIDE MY ROOM FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS.
MY BODY CAN NO LONGER HANDLE BEING DISCONNECTED FROM THE INTERNET.
BUT...
MASTER!
LOOK!
I GAVE WONDERFUL NEW NAMES TO THE FOLDERS YOU USE THE MOST OFTEN!
HUH?!
WHICH ONE DO YOU THINK YOUR EMBARRA-SSING ORIGINAL POEMS ARE SAVED IN?
PIG FEET
GRAVEYARD OF SEXUAL DESIRE
IF YOU GUESS WRONG, I'LL PUT YOUR TREASURED COLLECTION OF IMAGE FILES UP ON THE NET FOR ALL TO-
ENEEEEE!!
TO EXPLAIN HOW THIS ALL GOT STARTED, I'LL HAVE TO GO BACK TO A YEAR AGO...
Amazon.co.jp

HM?
WHAT IS THIS EMAIL? THERE'S DATA ATTACHED...
*1 YEAR AGO
Loading···
?!
EH...?!
NICE TO MEET YOU!
UH... UMM...
WH- WHAT EXACTLY... ARE YOU...?

AAACTUALLY I'M NOT QUITE SURE ABOUT THAT MYSELF!
にこっ
BUT I'LL BE WITH YOU FROM NOW ON!
MASTER!!
IF I HADN'T OPENED THAT WEIRD MAIL BACK THEN, MY INDOOR LIFE WOULD STILL BE SMOOTH SAILING.
I NEVER THOUGHT THIS MYSTERIOUS SOFTWARE WOULD TOTALLY TAKE OVER MY COMPUTER...
はぁ・・・
HMM...
BUT STILL...
YOU SPEND SO MUCH TIME IN FRONT OF THE COMPUTER EVERY DAY, AND YET YOU HAVEN'T COMPLETED EVEN ONE SONG...
I WONDER IF THAT MEANS YOU HAVEN'T BEEN STIMULATED ENOUGH TO INSPIRE YOU TO COMPOSE...
...HEY, ENE.
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE...
ALRIGHT, HERE I GO!
もそもそ

W- WAIT!! THIS ISN'T FUNNY!!
SAVE?
YES
NO
?!!
IF SHE CLICKS THAT,
THE SONG I WAS WORKING ON WILL DISAPP-
NO
AAAAAAH-HH!! MY SOOOO-NNNNG!!!

...
UH...
UWWAAAAAAHH!! TISSUES!! TISSUES, TISSUES!!
じゃ...
N- NO NO NO... O... R... T... THE OTHER KEYS DON'T WORK...
MASTER!
タン!
タン!!
rrtoorttortorr
タン!!
OH... OH RIGHT!
GET THE MOUSE TOO, QUICKLY!
MOUSE!

ポーン
ポーン
ポーン
ポーン
PLEASE!
SAVE ANY LIFE YOU CAN, SHINTARO!!
COME BAAAAA-AAACK!!

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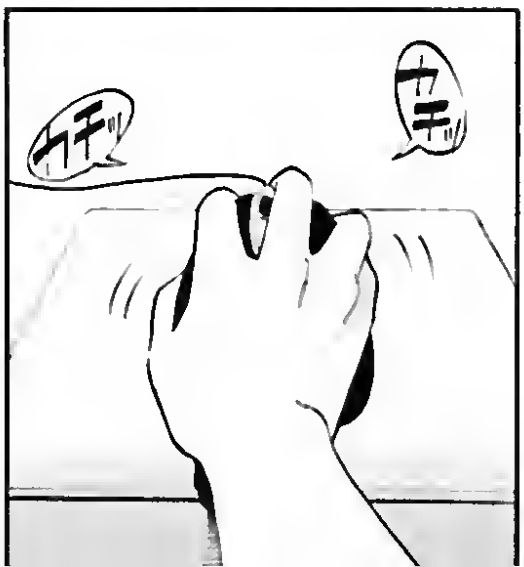
...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IT'S OVER... ONLY THE RIGHT CLICK WORKS...
OH!
NEVER MIND... IT WON'T HELP...
WAIT JUST A MOMENT, T, O, T, O, R...
T, R, O... MASTER, YOU CAN STILL WRITE THE WORD "ROT"!
UH... UMM...
MASTER...
ご注文ガイド
お届け日
翌日AM
3日後
4日後
営業日

HUH?!
WHAT?
ちらっ
I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU'RE FEELING SORRY?
UMMMM... I HADN'T... I HADN'T THOUGHT QUITE THAT FAR.
I WAS JUST TEASING... YOU KNOW...
SO APPARENTLY SHE CAN FEEL SORRY...

WELL... WHAT'S DONE IS DONE...
IT WAS AN OLD MODEL, AND I WAS THINKING OF REPLACING IT ANYWAY...
I KNOW, RIGHT?!!
I MEAN, I'M SURPRISED THIS ONE LASTED SO LONG!
YEEEEAH, I REALLY DID THINK YOU SHOULD GET A NEW ONE!
THIS... THIS GIRL...!!
BUT... HMMM, THIS ISN'T GOOD...
WHAT, YOU MEAN YOUR BRAIN?
ANYWAY, JUST LOOK FOR A SHOPPING SITE THAT'LL DELIVER RIGHT AWAY.
BUT... THAT'S THE PROBLEM.
TODAY IS AUGUST 14TH.
BECAUSE OF THE NATIONAL HOLIDAYS, NO SHOPS WILL DELIVER BEFORE THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW.

TWO WHOLE DAYS? WITHOUT A COMPUTER...?
I CAN'T LAST THAT LONG!!
くら,
THE DAY AFTER TOMOR-ROW...?
MASTER!
I'M GONNA DIE...!!
I KNOW, MASTER!
HUH...?
WHAT... DID YOU SAY...?
LET'S GO BUY ONE!!

I HAVEN'T WORN THESE CLOTHES IN AGES.
UNGH...
LEAVE THE HOUSE...
OR DIE WITHOUT A COMPUTER...

JUST TODAY.

JUST TODAY IS ENOUGH.
TODAY WILL BE THE FIRST AND LAST TIME
I GO OUTSIDE.

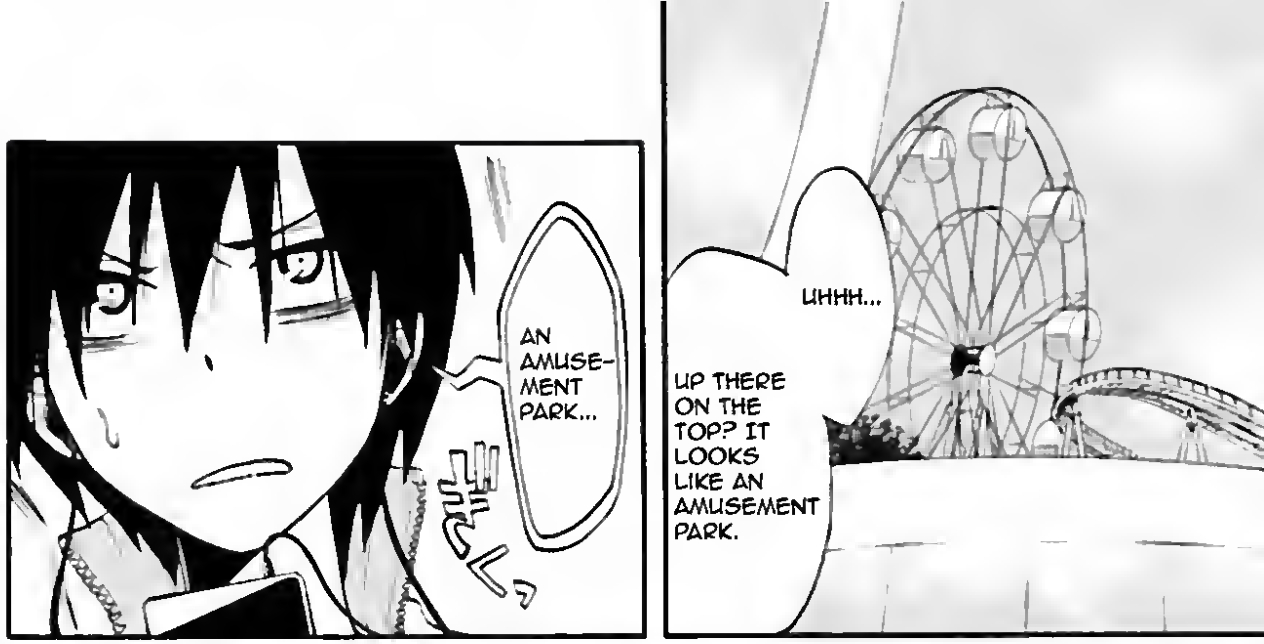
WHAT IS THIS...?
WAS SUMMER ALWAYS THIS HOT?
TODAY IS PARTICULARLY HOT. APPARENTLY SEVERAL PEOPLE HAVE COLLAPSED FROM HEATSTROKE.

HEH HEH... I CAN GET INSIDE ANYTHING!
BUT I NEVER THOUGHT I'D GET OUT MY OLD DUSTY PHONE FOR SOMETHING LIKE THIS...
YEAH, I'VE GOT IT, JUST IN CASE I REALLY DO NEED TO GO TO THE HOSPITAL.
DID YOU BRING YOUR INSURANCE CARD, MASTER?
MASTER... THAT FACE!
DON'T WORRY. I'LL BE A GOOD NAVIGATOR!!
WHEN I TRIED TO LEAVE HER, SHE SET OFF THAT EAR-SPLITTING SIREN...
THIS FEELS WEIRD.
YEAH, YEAH.
...

MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE I HAVEN'T BEEN OUTSIDE FOR SO LONG.
OR MAYBE MY HEAD HAS GONE STRANGE FROM THE HEAT.
OR MAYBE...
HEY, ENE.
WHAT IS IT, MASTER? YOUR PANTING IS REALLY CREEPY.
ISN'T SOMETHING... STRANGE...?
ABOUT THE TOWN...?
IT'S LIKE
SOMEBODY'S REBUILDING THE TOWN, BIT BY BIT.
THE TOWN?

WELL, THE LAST TIME YOU WERE OUTSIDE WAS TWO YEARS AGO, RIGHT? THIS AREA'S DEVELOPED A LOT SINCE THEN.
IT'S A BIT DIFFERENT FROM THE OLDER MAPS...
HMM, I SEE...
OH, BUT I REMEMBER THIS AREA.
I KNOW THERE WAS A PARK-
HEH HEH... I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY CAN PLAY IN THIS HEAT. KIDS...
MASTER! DON'T SPACE OUT! YOU'LL GET HEATSTROKE!
AND ANYWAY LOOK UP THERE! IF YOU TURN ONTO THAT STREET...
STEP LIVELY NOW!

ひょい
OHH.
WOW, IT'S REALLY BIG!!
THE HOMEPAGE SAYS, "THE ENTIRE INTERIOR IS MANAGED SAFELY BY COMPUTERS WITH THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY"!
DO YOU SUPPOSE THEY'LL REMEMBER TO ERASE "THE LATEST" FROM THAT DESCRIPTION NEXT YEAR?
きゃい
YOU SURE HIT 'EM WHERE IT HURTS, DON'T YOU?
AH!
MASTER! WHAT'S THAT?!
きゃい


AN AMUSE-MENT PARK...
ピルルル
UHHH...
UP THERE ON THE TOP? IT LOOKS LIKE AN AMUSEMENT PARK.

I WANNA GO!!!

カチン
AND EVEN IF I DID TAKE YOU, YOU COULDN'T DO ANYTHING THERE ANYWAY!!
AAAAH, SHUT UP! I'M NOT GOING!!
ピルル
ピルル
MASTER! LET'S GO, LET'S GO!!

NEVER MIND!!
HUH?!
EVEN I HAVE PLACES I'D LIKE TO VISIT!
MASER, YOU'RE SO INSENSITIVE!
THAT'D BE BORING, RIGHT?!
BUT I TOLD YOU, EVEN IF YOU WENT, YOU COULDN'T RIDE THE RIDES, SO WHAT WOULD BE FUN ABOUT IT?!
12:50
HEY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? HEEEY!!
AH-
I CAN'T HEAR ANYTHING... WHAT'S WITH HER?

WHOA.
THIS PLACE IS HUGE!
ガーッ
大商談会

EEK!
OOPS!
I DON'T HAVE A CLUE WHERE TO FIND THE COMPU-
I'M SO SORRY, SIR.
WOW, WHAT A GORGEOUS CLERK!!
EH...?
AH... UM...
ALRIGHT, NOW FOR...
UH, UM... EXCUSE ME...
MY BEST WINNING SMILE...!
UHH... COULD YOU TELL ME WH- WHERE THE COMPUTER ACCESSORIES ARE SOLD...?
COMPUTER ACCESSORIES? IN THAT CASE, PLEASE GO STRAIGHT DOWN THIS AISLE...
...
THANK YOU!

HEY ENE! I JUST TALKED TO A GIRL FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AGES (OTHER THAN MOM)! AND A CUTE ONE AT THAT!
WHATEVER, WHO CARES IF YOU'RE NOT THERE... WHA!
IS IT JUST 'CAUSE I HAVEN'T LEFT THE HOUSE IN SO LONG? I KEEP RUNNING INTO PEO-

UH...
UMM...
I... ERR... I'M SORRY...
OH MAN, I'M ABOUT TO GET KILLED! AAAAAH...
WHAT'S WITH THAT COLD STARE? IT'S LIKE SHE'S STARING AT A ROCK...
SORRY.
...DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT...
HUH?

AHHH... I REALLY CAN'T HANDLE BEING OUTSIDE.
...K?
SHE'S GONE...
WHAT WAS UP WITH THAT PERSON JUST NOW...?
...HUH?
!
UH, UM... EXCUSE ME...
UH... ENE...
I ASKED IF YOU WERE OK!
WHA...?! MY VOICE FROM JUST NOW...? YOU WERE RECORDING THAT?!
すっ
COULD YOU TELL ME WH- WHERE THE COMPUTER ACCESSORIES ARE SOLD...?

YEP. SO THAT'S WHAT YOU SOUNDED LIKE... WHAT DO YOU THINK, MASTER?
WHAT A HORRIBLY CREEPY VOICE... THIS CAN'T BE REAL?!
THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I SPEND A WHOLE YEAR ONLY TALKING TO A WEIRD PIECE OF SOFTWARE!!
THAT SOUNDS A BIT DIFFICULT FOR THE AVERAGE PERSON TO DEAL WITH.
OF COURSE, I'M USED TO YOU, SO I DON'T MIND...
OH MAN, I WANNA DIE...
I WISH YOU'D REALLY DISAPPEARED...
OH NO! I CAN'T UPSET HER!! NOTHING GOOD EVER COMES OF THAT!!
I... NO! SORRY! IT WAS A JOKE!
UH... UMM... ENE... YOU SEE...
WHAT IS IT?

LET'S GO!
AFTER WE FINISH SHOPPING, UMM... LET'S GO TO THAT AMUSEMENT PARK THING ON THE TOP FLOOR!
EH...?
DO YOU... MEAN IT...?
3,360
YEAH!
AFTER ALL, THIS IS MY FIRST AND LAST TIME GOING OUTSIDE!
I HOPE THIS CHEERS HER UP A BIT...
IT'S A PROMISE!!

SHE'S SURPRISED AT THE OUTSIDE WORLD AS WELL.
MAS-TER!
MASTER! LET'S GO SEE THE CLOTHES, TOO!
...
I SEE.
I WANNA GO ON THAT THING THAT GOES UP AND DOWN! AND THEN... UMM...
BUT STILL...
THIS WORLD MIGHT LOOK FAR MORE ATTRACTIVE TO HER THAN IT DOES TO ME.
OHH! THEN SHALL WE GO LOOK?
I'M NOT A COM-PLETE BAR-BAR-IAN! I DO BUY CLO-THES SOME-TIMES!
YOU'RE RIGHT! IF YOU TOLD ME YOU WERE GONNA BUY CLOTHES, I'D BE WORRIED THE WORLD WAS COMING TO AN END!
I TOLD YOU THIS IS THE FIRST AND LAST TIME! I DON'T NEED NEW CLOTHES!
ENE CAN'T FEEL THE HEAT OR SMELL ALL THE SMELLS...
チカ...
I GUESS THIS TYPE OF THING ISN'T BAD NOW AND THEN.
OH WELL... JUST FOR TODAY...
HMM...

WHA...?!
SHALL WE BEGIN...?
WELL THEN...

"THIS WILL BE THE FIRST AND LAST TIME SOMETHING LIKE THIS EVER HAPPENS TO ME." THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT THEN.
"I'M SURE"